

Lead in Wild Game

Wild game is often harvested with lead bullets or lead shot, except for waterfowl which are harvested with steel and other non-lead shot. When deer are shot with high velocity bullets, tiny lead particles or fragments may remain in processed deer meat. These are often too small to be seen and can disperse away from the wound channel. Children under 6 years of age and pregnant women are at the greatest risk from lead exposure and should avoid ingesting lead. Lead found in deer meat has NOT been shown to cause lead poisoning, but it is wise to avoid ingesting lead. As more information related to lead in deer meat or related health issues becomes available, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission will make it available to the public.

Tips to reduce the amount of lead in deer meat:

- When processing, trim liberally around the bullet wound channel. Lead particles may be too small to detect by sight or feel.
- Do not use portions of meat with extensive shot damage. Discard meat that is bruised, blood shot, or contains hair, dirt, bone fragments or grass.
- If you hire a meat processor, select one that does not mix your deer with other deer and who liberally trims wound channels and focuses on providing a quality product.
- To reduce the chance of lead getting into major muscles groups, deer should be shot in the neck or behind the front leg in the heart or lungs.
- Broadside shots at standing deer allow hunters to place shots precisely and lessen the need for a second shot.
- Avoid shooting deer in the front shoulders or hind quarters.
- Avoid shots at running deer.

Remember that:

- Low velocity lead muzzleloader bullets and shotgun slugs fragment less than high velocity rifle bullets.
- Deer killed with non-lead bullets contain no lead (most Barnes bullets are lead free).
- Deer killed with arrows contain no lead.